Promotion of Agricultural Mechanisation in Maharashtra

2460. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have introduced any Central Scheme for the promotion of agricultural mechanisation among small farmers in Maharashtra, particularly in Vidarbha region;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) how many small farmers were benefited therefrom during the last three years, year-wise and district-wise; and

(d) the steps being taken by Government to popularise the scheme in the State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) There is no separate scheme for the State of Maharashtra. However, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme Promotion of Agricultural Mechanisation among Small Farmers', has been under implementation since 1992-93 in the country, including Maharashtra, and Vidarbha region. The Scheme envisages the provision of subsidy to the farmer, registered cooperative societies, etc. at the rate of 30% limited to Rs. 30,000/-, for the purchase of tractors upto 30 Power-Take-Off Horse Power; together with matching implements. Till 1994-95, the subsidy, under the scheme, was available to the farmers having perennially irrigated land holdings between 6 and 8 acres; or equivalent. However, since 1995-96, the subsidy benefits, under the Scheme, have been extended to all categories of farmers.

(c) As the subsidy benefits, under the Scheme, have been extended to all categories of farmers since 1995-96, the data regarding the number of small farmers having been benefited thereunder, during the last three years, have not been maintained by the State of Maharashtra.

(d) The Scheme has been made popular in the State of Maharashtra by associating Zila Parishad in the selection of beneficiaries and tie up with the banking institutions to provide loans for the agricultural mechanisation.

Production of sunflower seed in Maharashtra

2461. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) what is the per hectare average production of sunflower seed in Maharashtra at present;

(b) whether the State has the potential to grow sunflower seed in very large quantities which can solve the edible oil problem but the potential is going waste due to apathy of Central and State Governments; and

(c) if so, what steps Government propose to take to increase the production of sunflower seed in Maharashtra in a big way?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) The per hectare average production of sunflower seed in Maharashtra for the year 1997-98 is 754 kgs.

(b) and (c) No, Sir. In view of fluctuation in area under sunflower in last four years which ranged between 3.70 and 5.38 lakh ha., the State of Maharashtra has only marginal potential for increase in area which cannot solve the edible oil problem. However, both the Central and the State Government are taking necessary steps for increasing the area Production Programme under which financial assistance is provided to the farmers on distribution of quality seed, improved farm implements,